

RUSSELL LIBRARY

123 Broad Street
Middletown, CT 06457-3350



(860) 347-2528
FAX (860) 347-6690
www.russelllibrary.org

A Gateway to the Future of Middletown

Good afternoon members of the General Law Committee.

My name is Vince Juliano. I am the Assistant Director of the Russell Library in Middletown, CT.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to briefly discuss this issue. I am in support of legislation that would require publishers of electronic books to offer eBooks for sale to public and academic libraries at the same rates as offered to the general public.

Russell Library is a member of a library cooperative known as Libraries Online, or LION, for short. LION member libraries, early on, sought to provide members of their respective communities with downloadable eBook service. We contract with a company to provide us with an electronic framework so our library customers may borrow eBook titles we purchase by downloading the titles, one at a time, to their own eReaders.

This is a new and exciting service. However, libraries have been the target of discriminatory pricing by several publishers. There are even some publishers who outright refuse to sell eBooks to libraries. Last year, one publisher brazenly tripled the library purchase price of several of its titles. For example, this publisher raised the price to us on one such title from \$35 to \$105! In reaction, the Board of Directors of LION imposed a moratorium on eBook purchases from that publisher. Since that time, that particular publisher has *selectively* lowered prices on some of its titles. However, the problem continues.

Several months ago, the Douglas County Libraries of Colorado, started publishing eBook pricing comparisons to highlight the problem of discriminatory pricing.

Here are a handful of facts from their January price comparison, when they looked at the Top 20 Books sold by Amazon.com:

- 17 of the top 20 books are available in eBook format.
- Of those 17 titles, 8 are not even being sold to libraries.
- Of the remaining 9 titles, the selling price to libraries is higher than the price that either of two major book distributors sells to the general public.
- If you add up the cost of those 9 titles, consumers who purchase them from Distributor #1 will pay a total of \$125.83. If a consumer buys them from Distributor #2, the total cost would be \$127.88. ***However***, if a library purchases those very same titles, the cost will be ***\$519.46!*** That means your local public library would be spending 4 times as much for the same titles that you or I, as individuals, would pay. It means a great deal more money spent on fewer books for the public.
- A few months ago, Douglas County Libraries did similar price comparisons using the New York Times Bestseller List and the Top 25 USA Today Best-Selling Books. The results were similar: libraries were charged more or were being shut out completely, in some cases.

Finally, I am using the term "purchase" very loosely here. In fact, a library never actually owns the eBooks it pays for. It merely *licenses* the title for its use. In short, libraries are being discriminated against in terms of pricing, and they are being limited in their ability to carry out their mission of providing reading material and information to the public.

Thank you.